

Senators Working to Advance Teague’s House-Passed Measure

□

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall today introduced legislation that expands efforts to collect DNA from serious criminal offenders, with an eye toward solving crimes, saving lives and preventing future crime. The bill closely follows legislation Representative Harry Teague introduced, which passed the House of Representatives earlier this year on an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 357 to 32.

The *Katie Sepich Enhanced DNA Collection Act of 2010*, cosponsored in the Senate by Senators Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Michael Bennet (D-CO), incentivizes states to expand efforts to collect DNA from individuals arrested or charged with serious crimes. The bill is named after [Katie Sepich](#), a promising graduate student attending New Mexico State University who was tragically murdered in 2003.

“We can’t get Katie back, or the other lives that have been lost to brutal, senseless crimes, but we can do something to help solve cases and prevent crimes from occurring in the future. One way to do that is to encourage the collection of DNA of individuals arrested for certain felony crimes,” **Bingaman** said. “I applaud Congressman Teague for winning strong bipartisan support for his bill in the House, and we will work to secure its passage in the Senate.”

“With this legislation, we give law enforcement the tools they need to help solve hideous crimes, and keep Katie’s memory alive by preventing heartbreaking tragedies like hers from happening in the future,” **Udall** said. “Congressman Teague should be commended for his work with the Sepich family and for his success in pushing this bill through the House. Senator Bingaman and I are committed to a similar effort in the Senate.”

“Katie’s Law is a common sense bill that will allow law enforcement to treat DNA evidence left at the scene of a crime as they do fingerprints. The fact is that the science has advanced and we should allow law enforcement to use all the technology available to them to better identify criminals and keep them from walking the streets,” said **Teague**. “I applaud Senators Bingaman and Udall for their commitment to move Katie’s Law through the Senate to make this New Mexico law the law of the land and keep our communities safe.”

The goal of the legislation is to encourage states that don’t have arrestee DNA collection processes to implement one, and to expand and improve DNA collection processes in states that do. To that end, the legislation would authorize the Department of Justice (DOJ) to award two types of grants – one for a “minimum” DNA collection process and another for “enhanced” collection.

Grants could be awarded to help cover the first-year costs of implementing a “minimum” DNA collection process, under which states would compare DNA collected from adults who are arrested or charged with certain serious crimes against the FBI DNA database, known as CODIS. Those crimes include murder/voluntary manslaughter, sex crimes punishable by imprisonment for more than five years and crimes involving kidnapping/abduction punishable by

imprisonment for more than five years.

Grants to states that have implemented an “enhanced” collection process would encourage states to submit DNA collected for certain serious felonies to CODIS. Those crimes include, murder/voluntary manslaughter, sex crimes, crimes involving kidnapping or abduction, burglary, and aggregated assault.

Arrestees who have their DNA included in the federal database may have their records expunged if their conviction is overturned, they are acquitted, or charges are dismissed or not filed within the applicable time period. Furthermore, the bill provides that as a condition of receiving a grant states must notify individuals who submit DNA samples of the relevant expungement procedures and post the information on a public website.

The bill will be sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

###